

HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF CONGO

SAMUEL DECALO,
VIRGINIA THOMPSON,
and
RICHARD ADLOFF

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**Samuel Decalo,
Virginia Thompson,
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African Historical Dictionaries, No. 69

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**The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
Lanham, Md., and London**

SCARECROW PRESS, INC.

Published in the United States of America

by Scarecrow Press, Inc.

4720 Boston Way

Lanham, Maryland 20706

4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone

Kent CT20 2DN, England

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British Cataloguing-in-Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Decalo, Samuel.

Historical dictionary of Congo / Samuel Decalo, Virginia Thompson, Richard Adloff.

p. cm. — (African historical dictionaries)

Rev. ed. of: Historical dictionary of Congo / by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Congo (Brazzaville)—History—Dictionaries. I. Thompson, Virginia McLean, 1903—. II. Adloff, Richard. III. Title.

IV. Series

DT546.215.D4 1996 967.24'003—dc20 95-50638 CIP

ISBN 0-8108-3116-3 (cloth: alk. paper)

TM The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48—1984.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

DT 967.24003
546.215 D355h
.D43

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Introduction to the Bibliography

Like with most other Francophone countries, there is a voluminous literature on Congo, though most is in French. While in a few fields (e.g. on contemporary developments) material in English has slowly accumulated, in most little exists, or is uneven in its coverage.

The bibliography that follows cannot, for reasons of space, be completely comprehensive. It presents to the serious reader most of the literature in English, and a cross-section of the most valuable material in French, with particular stress on the humanities and social sciences. Even then, in some fields the material has had to be selectively curtailed as, for example, with respect to the Bakongo kingdom, more directly relating to Zaire where the core of the kingdom was, and where significant fieldwork has been conducted.

The material is alphabetically organized under several broad topics, and as a further guide to some of the more useful studies the following comments may be of use. Under GENERAL WORKS the recent book by Noel is a useful introduction, just as the quarterly reports and annual profile of The Economist Intelligence Unit are invaluable for snapshots of Congolese developments. SCIENTIFIC STUDIES are totally dominated by French scholarship, and any specialists interested in these fields would need no guidance here. Under HISTORY the works of Balandier, Brunschwig, Coquery-Vidrovitch and the two Dupré's are seminal. Gide's accounts of his travels through French Congo helped change history, and are still of interest. Laman's controversial book on the Kongo is still much cited today. Mazenot's accounts of the penetration of northern Congo are without rival as is Martin's work in English on the Loango Vili. Obenga's (1977) survey of the history and the peoples of the Cuvette is also useful. Finally one can note the many outstanding works of Vansina on the Bateke.

ANTHROPOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY is suffused with fine studies on Congo's heavy rural-urban drift and urban unemployment. Balandier's work is seminal as is Bonnafé's, whose 1968 study of the JMNR links up with Congolese politics. Croce Spinelli's book is a classic. Gandoulou's studies of contemporary Congolese youth (in Paris and in Brazzaville) have been widely acclaimed. Jacobsen-Widding's book is

also very perceptive. Finally, the seminal works by Sautter, Soret and Vennetier need no introduction.

Under POLITICS, apart from the studies in English attention should be drawn to the important books by Bertrand, Gabou (1984), the collected speeches of Ngouabi (1975), and Wagret's 1966 book that is the best single-volume study of the country. There are too many good studies on ECONOMICS to be individually isolated, especially since some of the works already mentioned previously (e.g. Bertrand's book) cover Congo's economy as well.

Under RELIGION one can note the books by Andersson, MacTATURE need no introduction to Congo's literary outpouring, only a segment of which has been translated into English. One should also note Jacquot's remarkable scholarship in the field of LINGUISTICS. With respect to primary sources the monthly twin series of *Africa Research Bulletin*, the weekly *West Africa*, and the fortnightly *Africa Confidential* are indispensable, especially for those with only a command of English.

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